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A

True and Exact

RELATION

of the late Prodigious Earth-quake and Eruption of

MOUNT-ÆTNA, *or* MONTE-GIBELLO

As it came in a Letter written to His Majesty from *Naples* by the Right Honourable the Earl of *Winchilsea*, His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his Return from thence visiting *Catania* in the Island of *Sicily* was an Eye-witness of that Dreadfull Spectacle.

Together with more particular Narrative of the same as it is Collected out of several Relations sent from *Catania*.

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A

RELATION

of the late Tremendious Earth-quake and
Eruption of

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A true and Exact Relation of the late Prodigious Earthquake and Eruption of Mount-Ætna, or Monte-Gibello, as it came in a Letter written to His Majesty from Naples by the Right Honourable the Earl of Winchelsea, His Majesties late Ambassador at Constantinople, who in his Return from thence visiting Catania in the Island of Sicily was an Ey-witness of that Dreadfull Spectacle. Together with a more particular Narrative of the same as it is Collected out of several Relations sent from Catania.

May it please your Majesty.

IN my voyage from Malta to this place wherein I have used all the diligence the Season hath given me leave, I touched at the City of Catania in Sicily, and was there most kindly invited by the Bishop to lodge in his Palace, which I accepted, that so I might be the better able to inform Your Majesty of that Extraordinary Fire, which comes from Mount-Gibello 15 miles distant from that City; which for it's horridness in the Aspect, for the vast quantity thereof, (for it is 15 miles in length and 7 in breadth) for it's Monstrous Devastation, and quick progress, may be termed an Inundation of Fire, a Flood of Fire, Cinders and burning-stones, burning with

that Rage as to advance into the Sea 600 yards and that to a mile in [illegible] ragged Rocks, burning in four fathom water, two fathom higher than the Sea it self, some parts liquid and moving and throwing off, yet without great violence, the stones about it, which like a Crust of Lava bigness, and red hot, fell into the Sea every Moment in some place or other, causing a great and horrible noise, Smoke and Hissing in the Sea; And thus more and more coming after it, making a firm foundation in the Sea it self. I stayed there from nine a clock on Saturday morning, to Seven next morning, And this Mountain of fire and stones with cinders had advanced into the Sea 20 yards at least in several places; in the middle of this fire, which burned in the Sea, it hath formed a passage like to a River, with it's Banks on each side very steep and Craggy, and in this Channel moves the greatest quantity of this fire, which is the most liquid, with stones of the same composition and cinders all red hot, swimming upon the fire of a great magnitude; from this River of fire doth proceed under the great mass of the stones which are generally three fatham high all over the Countrey, where it burns and in other places much more, there are secret Conduits or Rivulets of this liquid matter, which communicates fire and heat into all parts more or less, and melts the stones and cinders by fits in those places where it toucheth them, over and over again, where it meets with Rocks or Houses of the same matter (as many are) they melt and go away with the fire, when they find other compositions, they turn them to Lime or Ashes (as I am informed) The composition of this fire, stones and cinders, are Sulphur, Nitre, Quick-silver, Sal-Armoniac, Lead, Iron, Brass, and all other Metals. It moves not regularly, constantly down hill; in some places it hath made the Valley's, Hills, and the Hills that are not high are now valley's. When it was night I went upon two Towers in divers places, and could plainly see at ten miles distance, as we judged, the fire to begin to run from the Mountain in a direct line, the flame to ascend as high and as big as one of the highest and greatest Steeples in Your Majesties Kingdom, and to throw up great stones into the Aire; I could see the River of fire descending the mountain of a terrible fiery or red coulour, and stones of a paler red, to swim thereon, and to be, some as big as an ordinary Table. We could see this fire to move in several

other

other places, and all the Countrey covered with fire, ascending with great flames in many places, smoking like to a violent furnace of Iron melted, making a noise with the great pieces that fall, especially those which fell into the Sea. A Cavalier of Malta, who lives there, and attended me, told me that the River was as liquid where it Issues out of the mountain as water, and came out like a Torrent with great violence, and is five or six fathom deep, and as broad, and that no stones do sink therein. I assure Your Majesty no pen can express how terrible it is, nor can all the Arts and Industry of the world quench, or divert that which is burning in the Countrey. In forty dayes time it hath destroyed the habitations of 9 or 10 thousand Persons, made two hills of one, 1000 paces high a piece, and one is four miles in compass, as your Majesty will see by the draught that I take the boldness to send herewith; It was the best I could get, but hath nothing of the progress into the Sea, the confusion was so great in the City, which is almost surrounded with mountains of fire, that I could not get any to draw one, but I have taken care to have one sent after me for Your Majesty: of 10000 persons which inhabited Catania 3000 did onely Remain, all their Goods are carried away, the Cannons of Brass are removed out of the Castle, some great Bells taken down, the City Gates walled up next the fire, and preparation made all to abandon the City.

That night which I lay there, it rain'd Ashes all over the City, and ten miles at Sea it troubled my eyes, that fire in it's progress met with a Lake of four miles in compass, and it was not onely satisfied to fill it up though it was four fathom deep, but hath made of it a mountain.

I send also to Your Sacred Majesty a Relation in Print which the Bishop gave me, wherein the beginning is Related, and several curious passages. I most humbly beseech Your pardon for the hindering Your Majesty so long from Your better Imployments; And I beseech you Great Sir ever to believe I Love and Reverence Your Person above all Expressions, for I am,

Naples the 27th *of April*
7 *of* May, 1669.

Your Majesties most obedient, most humble and most faithfull Subject and Servant.

Winchilsea.

A particular Narrative of the late dreadful Earthquake and Eruption, as it is collected out of several Relations from Catania.

MOunt-Ætna, or *Monte Gibello*, a Mountain so renowned throughout the world for its height and greatness, but much more for those prodigious Flames, Smoak and Ashes, which it hath cast out from the top of it, whilst the other parts are continually (even in the midst of Summer) covered with Snow, has been for many Ages observed once, or sometimes oftner, in the space of about fifteen years, to throw up more then ordinary flames, with much smoak and stones, and great quantity of ashes; which (though terrible to the neighbouring Towns and Villages) was yet wont in little time to abate of its fury, and prove but seldom more injurious to the Countrey near it, than by communicating largely its Ashes, which though for the present it did somewhat incommodate them, they had afterwards a considerable compensation in the product of their Lands, which by this means were rendred more fruitful.

But on Friday the 18th of *March*, 1669. the Sun was observed before its setting to appear of a pale and dead colour, which (being contrary to what it ever before appeared to us) struck no small terrour into the Inhabitannts, all objects appearing also of the

the ſame colour, with a palneſs received from that of the Sun. The ſame night happened in this City, as well as the whole Countrey here abouts, a terrible and unuſual Earthquake, whoſe ſtrong and unequal motions, joyned with horrible roaring from *Monte Gibello*, exceedingly frighted the Inhabitants, but was ſo extraordinary violent in the Country adjacent, that the people were forced to abandon their Houſes, and to fly into the Fields to avoid the danger threatned them from the falling of their Houſes. The Village of *Nicoloſi* was of all others the moſt dreadfully handled by this furious Earthquake, the Houſes and other Buildings being ſhaken all in pieces, and buried in their own ruines; the poor people (who had preſerved their lives by a timely flight, with ſuch little of their Goods as their haſty fears would permit them to carry out with them) continued a night or two in the Fields, beholding with grief and aſtoniſhment the ruine of their habitations. But obſerving that by theſe violent concuſſions the earth begun to open in ſeveral places, and to threaten them with inevitable ruine, they fled, though with much trouble and amazement to this City. Theſe ſhakings of the Earth being ſo frequent and violent, that the people went reeling and ſtaggering, with much difficulty ſupporting one another from falling, inſomuch as what with their want of ſleep, the pains they were forced to take in travelling, and the great Terrors imprinted on them by what they have ſeen and ſuffered, they appeared at their arrival in this Citty, as ſo many diſtracted people, wholly inſenſible of what they did.

The dreadful convulſion of the Earth was immediatly followed on Monday *March* 11th about ten at night, by three terrible eruptions much about the ſame time, and at a little diſtance one from the other.

The ſaid Eruptions was obſerved there on the ſide of *Monte Gibello*, about two miles beyond the Mountain, called *Montpileri*, with a terrible noiſe it threw its flames with much fury and violence about a hundred yards in height, its noiſe not roaring only inwardly from the belly of the Mountain as before, but violently cracking like peals of Ordnance or Thunder, from the ſide of it throwing out vaſt Stones, ſome of them three hundred

pound

pound weight, which being as it were shot through the air, fell several miles distant from the place, whilst the whole Air was filled with Smoak, burning Cinders, and Ashes which fell like a fiery Rain upon the Country.

In the mean time issued from the side of this prodigious Mountain a vast torrent of melting and burning matter, which like an inundation drowned, as in a flood of fire, the Country on this side of it.

This burning River ran down upon the Mountain *Monpileri*, which, opposing its direct course, it divided it self into two streams, which encompassed the said Mountain, one of them taking its way by *La-Guardia*, the Convent of St. *Anne*, and *Malpasso*; the other by the Towns of *Monpileri* and *Faliechi*, which in few hours were wholly destroyed and lost, not so much as any sign of them remaining, with several lesser Villages and Farms, and with them the famous Image of the blessed Lady of the *Annunciata*, which though highly reverenced throughout the whole Island, esteemed the wonder of *Sicily* and the whole world, and to which the people with much devotion resorted in pilgrimage from the remotest parts, was also swallowed and consumed by this dreadful Torrent.

This fiery and burning Deluge immediatly spread it self to above six miles in breadth, seeming to be somewhat of the colour of melted and burning Glasse, but as it cools, becomes hard and rocky, and every where in its passage leaves, Hills and Pyramids of that matter behind it.

At the same time *monte Gibello* from it's top raged with dreadful flames, which with its noise and concussions of the Earth still continuing, added not a little to the terror of the People, who ran with cryes and lamentations about the City and Country, expecting nothing but to be swallowed or consumed by fire, having no other apprehensions but of of death and a general conflagration.

The two torrents of Fire came forward, destroying all things in their way, and by Wednesday, *march* 13th, had one the West side branched it self into several streams, and over-ran *Campo Rotundo*, St. *Pietro* and *Mosterbianco*, with *La Potielli* and St. *Antoni-*

no :

no: And on the East-part ruined the lower part of *Moſcaluccia* and *Le Placebi*, taking its way towards this City.

On Thurſday the 14th the wind came East-wards, on which day fell abundance of Rain, which abated not the progreſs of the Fire, which on the East-ſide had from *Moſcaluccia* made its way to St. *Giovanni di Galerno*, the lower part whereof is deſtroyed, and paſſing on ſeemed to threaten this City on the one ſide, as did that on the Weſt-ſide the other.

As the Fire approached, the religious every where appeared with much devotion, carrying in proceſſion their Reliques, eſpecially thoſe of St. *Agatha*, the famous martyr of *Catania* in which they repoſed no ſmall confidence, followed by great multiutdes of people, ſome of them mortifying themſelves with Whips and other ſigns of penance, with great complaints and cryes, expreſſing their dreadful expectation of the events of thoſe prodigious fiery inundations.

Whilſt the people were thus buſied in their devotions, and aſtoniſht by their fears, news was brought to the magiſtrates of the City, that a conſiderable number of Thieves and Robbers had taken the opportunity of this general diſtraction to make a prey of the already diſtreſſed people, and that they had murthered ſeveral of them for their goods, and that it was to be feared that the City of *Catania* it ſelf might run ſome danger from the great numbers of them which were about the Country, and from thence took their opportunities to get into the Town; whereupon conſultation being had for the prevention of farther miſchief from them, the Commander of the Caſtle was ordered with a conſiderable number of Horſe and party of Spaniards to ſecure the Country and City againſt thoſe Robbers, who immediatly ſent out ſeveral parties with his Provoſt Marſhal, with order to ſeize on all ſuſpected perſons, and ſuch as were not able to give a good account of themſelves; and for ſuch as were taken in the fact robbing, to execute them by martial law, without any farther tryal, and accordingly cauſed three pair of Gallows to be ſet up up for their ſpeedy execution, one before the Gate, *Di Aci*, a ſecond in the market-place, and a third before the Gate *Della Decima*, ſetting ſtrong Guards before the Gates of the City, and

causing all suspected houses to be searched, an account to be given in of all Lodgers, and such persons to be secured as could any waies fall under a suspicion.

The poor people out of the Country being by this prodigious calamity stript out of all their estate, and reduced to great extremity, fled most of them for refuge and relief to this City, with great lamentations, moving the charity of the magistrates, which was readily inclined to give them the best assistance they were able; and the Citizens moved by their complaints and sufferings, freely opened their doors, filling their houses with as many of those distressed people as they could possibly receive, the Bishop and all persons of quality and estate contributing largely for their support, till better order could be taken for the disposing of them,

The City of *Messina* also, and several other Cities informed of this extraordinary calamity, sent hither large supplies of provisions, offering their best assistance to this place in case of extremity.

All the Elements seemed at this time to make war against us, and to conspire together for the punishment of the Inhabitants, the Air was continually darkned with clouds and smoak agitated by great and violent winds, and oftentimes showred down great Rains, insomuch as the Sun from the beginning of these eruptions very seldom appeared to us, and when it did (with extraordinary paleness) for a little time only, and (as it were abhorring so dreadful a spectacle) soon hid its face again under a thick cloud.

The Sea ran much higher than it was wont to do, and by its extraordinary roaring, and in some places over-flowing its banks, added not a little to our consternation; the Land every where invested with Thieves, insomuch, that till by the extraordinary care taken by the magistrates and officers several executions was done upon such as were apprehended in the fact, no person was able to stir abroad without danger of his life, whilst the fire by this prodigious over-flowing of the mountain threatned to take possession of them all.

On Friday the 15th, the stream of fiery matter which destroyed the lower part of St. *Giovanni di Garlermo*, divided it self into two parts, one of its branches taking its way toward *Mosterbianco*

th'

the other threatning the City of *Catania*, but this laſt was obſerved to move with more ſlowneſs than before, having in twenty four hours time ſcarcely gained one mile.

On the 30th being monday, the torrents being ſtill ſeen to draw nearer and nearer unto this City, the Senate & *monſeguior Camluchi*, the Biſhop of this place, followed by all the Clergy, Secular and Regular, and an infinite number of people went in a ſolemn proceſſion out of this City to *monte di St. Sophia*, carrying out with greateſt devotion their choiſeſt Reliſts, and upon an Altar erected in view of the mountain, expoſed them, where they celebrated maſs, and uſed the exorciſmes accuſtomed upon ſuch extraordinary occaſions, all which time the mountain ceaſed not as before with exceſſive roaring to throw up its ſmoak and flames with extraordinary violence, and abundance of great ſtones which were carried through the Air, ſome of them falling within their view, though at ten miles diſtance from the eruption, the aſhes which proceeded from thence were ſcattered in great abundance, aſwell on this City as on the Country adjacent, every where in the Fields with Cinders, and the heat of the ſaid Aſhes deſtroyed the graſs, which obliged the people to drive away their Cattle to a farther diſtance, which would otherwiſe have periſhed for want of food.

Theſe ſtreams of ruine daily crept nearer and nearer to this City, but by uneven and irregular motions, according as it was more or leſs ſupplied from its foundation: But on Wedneſday the 20th we perceived that that branch of it which ſeemed moſt to threaten this City from *St. Giovanni de Galermo* was wholly extinguiſht, and that which bent its courſe towards *Moſterbianco* ran but ſlowly, and gave us ſome hopes that its fury was alſo neat ſpent; but the other torrent which had before over-thrown *Moſterbianco* continued its motion with as much violence as ever, being in breadth above a muſquet-ſhot over, but in probability could not eaſily over-flow to the Weſt-wards, which was defended by its rocky ſcituation: Another branch which ran by *Santo Pietro* was obſerved to be much larger than the reſt, and its ſtream more quick and active, but meeting with ſome oppoſition in its way, it made ſome ſtop, only ſending out a Rivulet towards the Eaſt-ward about three or four yards wide of its moſt ſubtle and

active matter, which directed its course toward a small village about a furlong distant from its main stream; another branch threatned *Campo Rotundo*, but bent its course Westwards towards the Farm of *Valcorrente*, where its fiery body was scattered into several deep and rocky places, without any considerable damage.

About this time we had hopes that the violence of this eruption had been over, the mountain not throwing out its flames with that violence as before, and its noise and roaring in a great measure ceased.

Those who at neareſt diſtance took a view of the mountain, informed, that the top of it was fallen in; the mountain ſuppoſed to want near a mile of its former height, that the largeſt of the mouths from whence theſe fiery ſtreams were vented, was about a mile in compaſs, but the view of this dreadful inundation carried ſo much terror in it as they were not able to expreſs, from all theſe mouths were vomited Rivers of a thick and fiery ſubſtance of ſtone and mettals melted, whoſe depth was various, according to the ſeveral places it filled in its paſſage, in ſome places four, in others eight, twelve or fifteen yards and upwards, its breadth in ſome places 7 miles, in others much more, its flame like that of Brimſtone, and its motion like that of Quick-ſilver, advancing ordinarily very ſlowly, unleſs where it was provoked by the addition of a freſh torrent or ſome conſiderable deſcent; whereſoever it paſſed it left large heaps of its congealed matter, with which it covered and burnt the earth, melting the walls of Caſtles and Houſes, throwing down and conſuming all before it, nothing being yet found able to reſiſt its force, nor any thing able to quench burning, water being obſerved rather to add to its fury, whereſoever it had paſſed, it had left its dreadful marks behind it, levelling ſome Hills and raiſing others, ſo much changing the Situations, that not the leaſt trace of any place or Town remains, nothing being to be ſeen but confuſed heaps of ragged Stones, which yielding a noiſome fume, ſtrike terror and aſtoniſhment into all that behold it.

On

On Friday the 22th the mountain roared with much loudnes, and threw up from it's mouths a vast quantity of matter, which formed two large hills higher and larger than that of *Monpileri*, with a large bank of the same matter to the Eastward, sending down a violent stream of its liquid matter towards *Malpasso*, much enlarging the former Current, and passing thence to *Campo Rotundo*, and *Santo Pietro* compleated the Ruins of those Towns, driving furiously towards *Misterbianco*, the other stream by *Santo Giovanni de Galerma* being wholy diverted and extinguish't?

From this time till the 25th the mountain continued silent, but then it burst out again with more force than ever before, its noise much louder, like Peles of Ordnance, and so forcible and lasting as for 24 hours it caused a shaking and trembling in our buildings, the Aire so filled with smoake and Ashes as darkned the face of the Skye?

The Birds and Fowle about this time, either through want of food or illnes of Aire which was corrupted with the noisome smells arising from these burnings, were observed to lye dead in all places?

On the 28th the grand Current was advanced neer the City as far as the old *Capucins* which struck so great a terror into the people that most of them left the City, only some Officers remaining with such persons as were under their command, who have secured and sent away the magazin, and all the Artillery from the Castle.

A later Relation from *Catania* bearing date the 27th of *April*, gives us this farther accompt, viz.

The dreadfull Inundation from *monte-Gibello* having destroyed many Castles and Towns: with an infinite loss and utter ruine to the Inhabitants, arrived lately with a renewed force at *Misterbianco*, which it has wholly ruin'd, from thence passing unto *Albanelli* in 4 dayes space destroyed all the Gardens and Vineyards, with sixty three thousand Vines?

On

On Wednesday *April* the 16th with an Impetuous fiery Torrent it came towards St. *Aniello*, where all the remainder of the Inhabitants of this City were Spectators of it, which resembled a River of melted and burning brass about 30 ells wide, running with swiftness to the Arch of *Marcus Marcellus*, a famous piece of Antiquity, and passing under it ruined about 6 ells of it, which was the breadth of the Current in that place, from thence it ran to *Madonna di Monserrato* which is wholly destroyed, then falling down to *Madonna delle Gratiè* it entred in at one Gate and passed through another, without any considerable hurt, and running through the Gate *Della Decima* filled all the *Plain Di Sabiara* where it was above 6 ells deep, then taking its way towards the Bull-wark on the Sea side, under the Castle of this City, it ran by, two ells deep into the Sea, in which (to the great wonder of all that saw it) it has made it's progress a mile in length, and as much in breadth, and is drawing towards the gate of the Channel, which gives us great apprehensions least it may that way invade the City it self; Nor is there less danger on the side *Deltindaro* where there runs a great Torrent of the same active matter, which drawes near, and seems to threaten the Walls, and is in that place about a mile in bredth, having overflowed and destroyed all the Gardens from the gate *Della Decima* as farr as *Madonna delli Amelati*.

A List of the most considerable Towns and places Ruined and destroyed by the dreadfull Earthquake and Eruptions?

The Towns of *Padaro* and *tre Castagne*, the greatest part destroyed by the Earthquake?

The Towns of *Le Guardia*, *Malpasso*, *Campo Rotundo*, *La Potielli*, St. *Pietro*, *Misterbianco*, *Montpileri*, *La Annunciata*, *Falicchi*, *Placchi*, wholly overflowed consumed and lost in this fiery Inundation, with all the lands belonging to them, no footsteps of them remaining?

The

The Towsn of *Masculucia*, and St. *Giovanni de Galermo*, ruined in part.

The large Gardens and Vineyards of *Albanelli*, over-flown and destroyed.

The famous piece of Antiquity of *Marcus Marcellus* much ruined.

Madonna di Monserrato destroyed, besides many Castles, Farms and other places which have run the same fortune, whose names were for brevity past over.

FINIS.